

Bumper £24 million to boost children's literacy

More primary school pupils will benefit from high quality phonics and expert literacy teaching as part of new funding announced today (Sunday 9 October).

Over £24 million is set to be invested in building children's literacy skills as the government continues to support pupils' recovery from the pandemic and work towards the target of 90% of primary children reaching the expected standard in literacy and numeracy.

The announcement marks the conclusion of Dyslexia Awareness Week, with targeted literacy support playing a pivotal role in helping pupils with dyslexia develop all-important reading and writing skills.

The investment is part of the Government's commitment to make sure every young person leaves school with a strong grasp of literacy and maths, and sits alongside further targeted support such as the National Tutoring Programme.

Education Secretary Kit Malthouse said:

If any child leaves schools without the ability to read and write properly, we have failed them.

It is imperative that we support schools and pupils following the disruption of the pandemic. This funding will help us do that, but also help to instil a love of reading in young people that can last throughout their education and beyond.

Rachel Davis, Headteacher and Strategic Lead, Little Sutton English Hub said:

The funding available to schools to implement validated phonics programmes has been wide reaching, particularly with the introduction of the Accelerator Fund programme last year.

Our team of highly trained Literacy Specialists have worked with schools to deepen their understanding of the impact of phonics teaching.

Crucially, our work in the English Hubs Programmes has given staff the ability to identify specific barriers to individual pupils' learning and implement precise, swift intervention. This has helped children who find reading more difficult to achieve success. It has also greatly supported schools in their Covid Recovery programme.

The funding will support the continuation and growth of the English Hubs Programme, enabling even more schools to embed high quality phonics teaching and benefit from the intensive support and access to literacy specialists.

The programmes will help build children's confidence and ability to read and write, including for those with dyslexia, and provide a solid foundation for children to build upon so they can develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both information and for fun.

Building on the Accelerator Fund – which helps schools access specialist programmes of support for pupils and has so far seen £4 million distributed to over 450 schools – this funding will boost existing programmes in schools to support pupils' learning to read.

Phonics approaches, when embedded in a rich literacy environment, are amongst the most effective methods of teaching children to read, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, according to evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF).

This sits alongside the Government's commitment to support schools with early identification of need and intervention for children who require extra support, as clearly outlined in the Schools White Paper, SEND Review and Alternative Provision Green Paper.

First legal action launched to keep residents safe

- First step in legal action taken against freeholder failing to fix building safety defects
- Owners of Vista Tower told to start remedial works or be forced to by the courts
- Act marks next step in using new powers to ensure action on building safety

The Department for Levelling up has taken the first step in legal action against Grey GR, an organisation ultimately owned by RailPen, protecting residents and ensuring proper building safety.

Grey GR Limited Partnership, the freeholder of Vista Tower, a fifteen-storey tower block in Stevenage, has been given 21 days to commit to remediating the tower's fire safety defects or an application will be made to the courts.

This action follows two years of delays for more than 100 residents living in the tower and reaffirms the government's commitment to making sure building owners, landlords and developers meet their legal obligations and protect tenants in their own homes.

The freeholder is one of the first to face action by the newly created Recovery Strategy Unit, set up to identify and pursue firms who repeatedly refuse to fix buildings, working closely with other enforcement authorities.

Levelling Up Secretary of State, Simon Clarke said:

“The lives of over 100 people living in Vista Tower have been put on hold for over two years whilst they wait for Grey GR to remediate unsafe cladding. Enough is enough.

“This legal action should act as a warning to the rest of industry’s outliers – big and small. Step up, follow your peers and make safe the buildings you own or legal action will be taken against you.”

Sophie Bichener, leaseholder in Vista Tower said:

“We thank the Government for helping us, and leaseholders across the country – Vista Tower residents simply want to live in safe and secure homes.

“This action is a step in the right direction for the innocent leaseholders still desperately pleading with their building owners to take responsibility.

“Now the leaseholder protections are in force – it should serve as a warning to those entities still playing games and doing all they can to dodge their legal obligations.”

Leaseholders of Vista Tower have been handed bills and unable to sell, despite unsafe cladding being identified on the building over two years ago.

Whilst the building registered with the Building Safety Fund in 2020, the funding agreement is yet to be signed, meaning the government cannot release any money.

There are at least 23 other buildings registered with the Building Safety Fund that have been unable to progress due to unnecessary delays. The department is examining these cases closely and considering next steps.

The Secretary of State will also consider issuing an application for a Remediation Contribution Order against other entities associated with Grey GR including Railways Pension Trustee Company Limited (RailPen) and Railtrust Holdings Limited (Railtrust), requiring them to financially contribute to the remediation costs.

Leaseholders are now able to apply for a remedial order and are encouraged to do so if the owner of their building is failing in their responsibilities. More guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-sure-remediation-work-is-done#how-does-this-affect-me-the-leaseholder>

Every Mind Matters campaign urges people to be kind to their mind

- New campaign launched after 7 in 10 Brits report regularly experiencing the 'Sunday Scaries', mostly impacting young adults
- Over four million Mind Plans have been created since the campaign first launched in October 2019
- Campaign backed by celebrity advocates Vick Hope, Scarlett Moffatt, Tom Grennan, and leading psychologist Kimberley Wilson

The public is urged to "be kind to your mind" as the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) launches the latest Better Health – Every Mind Matters campaign.

Ahead of World Mental Health Day, which begins on Monday 10 October, the campaign calls on people to do small things which can make a big difference to their mental wellbeing and directs them to free tips and advice.

New research commissioned by OHID reveals almost 7 in 10 Brits report regularly experiencing the 'Sunday Scaries' (67%), increasing to three quarters (74%) for those aged 18-24. Work stresses, lack of sleep and looming to-do lists were reported as the top causes of feelings of stress or anxiety on a Sunday

By answering five simple questions through the Every Mind Matters website people can get a personalised 'Mind Plan' giving them tips to help deal with stress and anxiety, boost their mood, sleep better and feel more in control.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Thérèse Coffey, said:

My focus is on making sure people can get the care they need, when they need it – and that includes for their mental wellbeing.

The Every Mind Matters tool is a great way to build your mental resilience and help ward off the anxiety many of us feel on a Sunday.

Famous faces – including BBC Radio 1 host Vick Hope, TV personality Scarlett Moffatt and pop star Tom Grennan, along with leading psychologist Kimberley Wilson – are backing the new campaign and calling on the nation to be kind to their mind and help deal with feelings of anxiety by doing small things that can make a big difference.

The 'Sunday Scaries' are shown to peak just after 5pm for many as thoughts and worries turn to the week ahead; with Google searches around sadness spiking on a Sunday as people turn to the internet for help. Searches for 'trouble sleeping' also peak on a Monday, reflecting the nation's struggle to unwind as the weekend draws to a close.

In fact, searches for anxiety have increased 170% in the last 10 years.

To distract themselves from the 'Sunday Scaries' young people aged 18-24 are most likely to scroll on social media, whereas those aged 25-32 are most likely to binge watch TV and those aged 33-40 are most likely to comfort eat.

Every Mind Matters is an important tool for early intervention to build mental resilience. Preventing people's mental health from deteriorating is a key part of the government's Plan for Patients supporting people to stay well and stay within the community.

Over four million Mind Plans have been created since the campaign first launched in October 2019 and the Every Mind Matters website provides a range of other resources, as well as dedicated support to help parents and guardians look after the mental wellbeing of the children and young people they care for.

Psychologist, Kimberley Wilson, said:

Many people experience a feeling of heightened anticipatory anxiety on a Sunday, otherwise known as the 'Sunday Scaries'. Often when people feel sad or anxious, they spend time trying to distract themselves, by binge watching TV or spending hours scrolling on social media, for example. But these 'distraction' habits can actually exacerbate the problem.

It's so important to enjoy every last minute of your weekend and start the week in the best frame of mind. So, if you experience the Sunday Scaries like clockwork every week or feel sad or anxious, try getting active, which can help you to burn off nervous energy, writing down or keeping a diary of what you are doing and how you feel at different times to help identify what's causing anxiety and what you need to do to help manage it. Small things can make a big difference to our mental wellbeing.

Pop star, Tom Grennan, said:

I still experience this anticipatory anxiety; it can come out of nowhere, it doesn't have to be on a Sunday! Sometimes it hits before a show but sometimes it's just a general feeling I can't immediately shake. I've found that keeping up my fitness and really prioritising exercise has helped me stay focused and my other tasks are easier to manage. Keeping my diet consistent has helped too, like staying away from too much caffeine and keeping everything balanced helps to ease anxiety. Do something for yourself this weekend and please be kind to your mind!

TV personality, Scarlett Moffatt, said:

We've all been there when you're trying to relax and enjoy the last few moments of the weekend but can't stop worrying about the week ahead! For me, getting outside and going for a walk with a friend really helps to lift my mood and puts me in the best frame of mind. No matter how much time you have, incorporating small actions into your routine can really help to your mental wellbeing either on a Sunday or whenever anxiety strikes.

- The assets for the campaign can be found here: [EMM Assets](#)
- Search Every Mind Matters for more free ways to be kind to your mind. Take the free, [Mind Plan quiz](#) to get a personalised mental health action plan with practical tips to help you deal with stress, anxiety, low mood and trouble sleeping.
- The research was commissioned by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities and conducted by Censuswide. It used a sample of 4013 general respondents aged 18-50 in England. The data was collected between 21.09.2022 – 26.09.2022

[Housing order introduced in Norfolk, Suffolk and parts of Essex to protect poultry and captive birds](#)

Mandatory housing measures for all poultry and captive birds in Norfolk, Suffolk and parts of Essex are to be introduced from 00:01 on 12th October, following a decision by the United Kingdom's Chief Veterinary Officer.

The housing order legally requires all bird keepers in these hotspots to keep their birds indoors and to follow stringent biosecurity measures to help protect their flocks from the disease, regardless of type or size. Bird keepers are advised to consult the [interactive map](#) to check if they are impacted and should then read the [new regional AIPZ with housing measure declaration](#) which sets out the requirements in Norfolk, Suffolk and parts of Essex.

The Chief Veterinary Officer is now encouraging all bird keepers in the affected regions to use the next five days to prepare, including taking steps to safeguard animal welfare, consult their private vet and expand housing where necessary.

The new housing measures build on the strengthened biosecurity measures that were brought in as part of the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) last month, covering Norfolk, Suffolk and parts of Essex. The AIPZ means that all bird keepers need to take extra precautions, such as restricting access for non-essential people on site, ensuring workers change clothing and footwear

before entering bird enclosures and cleaning and disinfecting vehicles regularly to limit the risk of the disease spreading.

Over the last year, the United Kingdom has faced its largest ever outbreak of avian influenza with over 160 cases confirmed since late October 2021. The introduction of the housing measures comes after the disease was detected at 16 premises in the affected areas since the beginning of September, as well as several reports in wild birds.

The United Kingdom's Chief Veterinary Officer Christine Middlemiss said:

We are seeing a growing number of bird flu cases on commercial farms and in backyard birds across Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex, and expect the risk to continue rise over the coming months as migratory birds return to the UK.

We are now taking further action to help protect flocks from this highly infectious and devastating disease. Keepers in these hotspots must continue to follow strict biosecurity standards to protect their flock, and should use the next few days to prepare and move their birds indoors.

The housing measure means bird keepers in the affected area must:

- housing or netting all poultry and captive birds
- cleanse and disinfect clothing, footwear, equipment and vehicles before and after contact with poultry and captive birds – if practical, use disposable protective clothing
- reduce the movement of people, vehicles or equipment to and from areas where poultry and captive birds are kept, to minimise contamination from manure, slurry and other products, and use effective vermin control
- keep records of mortality, movement of poultry and poultry products and any changes in production
- thoroughly cleanse and disinfect housing on a continuous basis
- keep fresh disinfectant at the right concentration at all farm and poultry housing entry and exit points
- minimise direct and indirect contact between poultry and captive birds and wild birds, including making sure all feed and water is not accessible to wild birds
- prevent access by poultry to ponds and watercourses and ensure that birds are kept in fenced or enclosed areas

The UK Health Security Agency continue to advise that the risk to public health from the virus is very low and the Food Standards Agency advice remains unchanged, that avian influenzas pose a very low food safety risk for UK consumers. Properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, are safe to eat.

The regionalised housing measures will remain in force in Norfolk, Suffolk and parts of Essex until further notice.

A regional AIPZ without housing measures remains in force in Cornwall, Devon, Isles of Scilly and parts of Somerset. The need to introduce mandatory housing measures as part of the AIPZ in force in the south west or further national AIPZs with or without housing will be kept under regular review as part of the government's work to protect flocks.

Keepers should report suspicion of disease in their birds to APHA on 03000 200 301. Keepers should familiarise themselves with our [avian influenza advice](#).

Defra has also set out practical guidance to support land managers, the public and ornithological and environmental organisations in their response to the growing threat of avian influenza to wild birds. The ['Mitigation Strategy for Avian Influenza in Wild Birds in England and Wales'](#) sets out how these groups, together with the government and its delivery partners, can mitigate the impact of avian influenza on wild bird populations whilst protecting public health, the wider environment and the rural economy.

British lamb shipped to America for first time in over two decades

British lamb has now been exported to the USA for the first time in over 20 years.

The United States Department for Agriculture (USDA) agreed to open the market for British lamb last year, and following the necessary inspections, the first consignment was flown to the USA this week containing lamb produced by meat processors Dunbia from its site in Carmarthenshire, Wales.

Industry estimates the US-market will be worth £37 million in the first five years of trade, opening up access for British farmers to a market of over 300 million American consumers to enjoy the United Kingdom's world-renowned lamb, part of the government's work to boost exports and grow our economy.

The deal agreed last year comes alongside the wider efforts across government to drive growth and open up new opportunities for the British food and farming sector, in turn boosting jobs, skills and productivity across the country. This includes capitalising on new trade freedoms outside the EU through export opportunities, ensuring that premium products are not just enjoyed at home but championed around the world.

Environment Secretary Ranil Jayawardena said:

Tucking into roast lamb for Sunday lunch is quintessentially British – and now millions of American families will now be able to

enjoy our top-quality lamb too.

The opportunity for growth for British food is enormous – bringing jobs, skills and prosperity across the nation. With our mission to unlock growth, we will continue to secure more opportunities for our farmers and food producers to benefit from new markets.

Trade Secretary Kemi Badenoch said:

Seeing our world-class lamb back on American menus is fantastic news for our farmers. Now they can sell to a consumer market of over 300 million people, which support jobs and growth in a vital British industry.

It also shows our two nations working together to remove barriers and boost trade, building on recent resolutions on steel tariffs, and whisky exports.

Dr Richard Irvine, UK Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer, said:

This represents a major achievement for the UK lamb industry. We are proud of our food safety and the quality of food we are able to produce.

Gaining access for the export of British lamb to the USA represents another success for British industry, in addition to the existing agreements enabling beef and pork exports from the UK to the USA.

AHDB International Market Development Director Dr Phil Hadley said:

We are delighted to see this first order of UK lamb heading to the US, following years of negotiations and hard work by AHDB, UK government and the wider industry to get our lamb back on American plates after an absence of more than 20 years.

We hope this order will be the first of many, allowing millions of US consumers to enjoy our world-renowned lamb, while bringing a major boost to UK sheep producers and exporters, who have another valuable market in which to sell their products.

This announcement follows a string of export successes in the last two years including the first export of beef to the USA in decades and the first ever export of British pork to Chile.

NFU President Minette Batters said:

It is great news that British farmers producing top quality, sustainable, high-welfare lamb once again have access to the US market, something we've been working hard to achieve for over two decades. Expanding into markets such as these will be crucial to maintain the profitability of farm businesses.

Earlier this year I set out our ambition to grow our agri-foods exports by 30% by 2030 and become the number one supplier of choice both at home and abroad. It's vital we seize opportunities such as these so British food producers can export more Great British food overseas in the years ahead.

Phil Stocker Chief Executive of the National Sheep Association said:

This is fantastic news for the British sheep industry and it comes after many years of hard work, by Government and their departments, by AHDB and devolved nations levy bodies, by NSA, and by the industry operators who have made it happen.

The success of the British sheep industry is underpinned by market opportunities and access to the US will offer just that, building on what is already a healthy demand for our high quality British lamb and sheepmeat here and overseas.

The Small Ruminant Rule that banned British and EU lamb imports for over 20 years was rescinded by the [US Government in January of this year](#).